



Tales from the Trape

By Dr. Kathy Gruver

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Dr. Kathy Gruver talks more about her Tales From The Trapeze in her Luxe Beat Magazine audio clip

Since I am involved in natural health, people assume certain things about me. They assume I do yoga and meditate all day long. They assume I really really enjoy the music I play during my massages; they assume I'm vegetarian and that I don't drink wine or swear. Those things could not be farther from the truth. I'm a practical carnivore, I meditate in my own way, I'm not a fan of yoga, I do drink wine and if you want to hear me swear, put on a Steeler game. So when a client asked me what I did to relax and I rattled off a list, including things like scuba diving, hip hop, swimming with sharks, zip lining, spelunking, repelling, and skydiving, she asked me what in the world was left on my bucket list. I told her I didn't believe in bucket lists, that if there were things you wanted to do and it was possible, you should go do them as soon as possible.

She asked me what was left that I hadn't gotten to yet and I answered, flying trapeze. The moment the words came out of my mouth, I thought, "Oh, I better get on it." So as she was getting dressed after her massage, I was on the computer, trying to find a place where I could do flying trapeze. I discovered it at a school in Santa Monica, California. That night, I went home and announced to my husband that I was going to take a weekend away, part of which included doing flying trapeze. And I did, and from that moment on I was hooked.

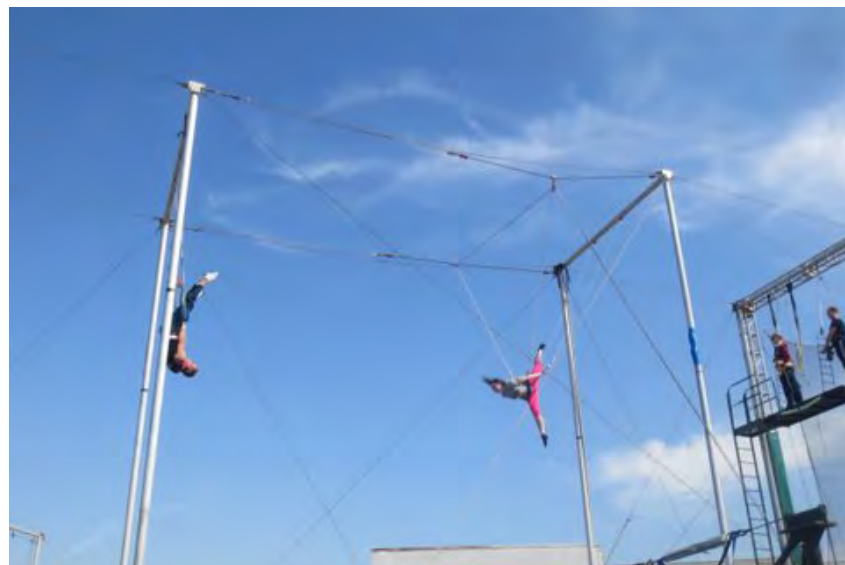
My school's tagline is, "Forget fear, worry about the addiction." It couldn't be further from the truth. The second I climbed that ladder and grabbed onto that very heavy bar, I knew this was something that was going to be part of my life. The very first class (now looking back) is quite simple. You do a knee hang from the bar like you would've from any jungle gym as a kid. You reach your arms forward, towards a strapping young man with his shirt off who catches

you, and then drops you gently into a net. That very pedestrian description cannot even begin to explain the joy, exultation, exuberance and thrill felt when your hands met his. You swung for a moment and fell 12 or 15 feet into the net with a bounce.

Having grown up as a dancer and still dancing three or four days a week here in Santa Barbara, I consider myself pretty athletic. But I was surprised at the number of people who came up to me and asked how long I worked there. They said I looked like a natural and were so impressed it was my first class. This was especially when they discovered that I undertook this physical challenge at the ripe old age of 43. Being the Type A driven person that I am, I knew I had to go farther. So I went back...again and again. It's been almost 2 years for me. And I've worked through 15 or 20 tricks, which included an emergency visit to urgent care, after landing wrong in the net and practically ripping off my little toe. I don't recommend that.

But I digress. The thing that I love so much about trapeze is it's not only a physical challenge. It does take a lot of hand strength, shoulder strength and core strength. It also takes strength of character to climb the 30-foot ladder to stand at the top, accept the bar and trust that you can let go and fly through the air. This is the strongest and most fit I've ever been. And I find it to be a





stress reliever, which is funny, because most people who think about it are completely stressed out by it. But there is something so powerful about relinquishing personal control, listening to your calls and being safely swept up by someone who's there fully to protect and support you.

As a health and wellness writer, someone who specializes in mind-body medicine, I will say it is a mindfulness practice; a meditation, a challenge to stay in the present moment. You cannot worry about what you did the minute before and not fear what you are about to do. You have to be there, in the now, and wait, sometimes longer than you think. But the call will come when it's time to let go and fly. It's when you're not in the present, when you are not fully there and listening to what is being said to you, that things go awry-- just like in life. Our stress is in the past, and the future and present moment are pure. It has to do with relinquishing control, adding trust, and believing in yourself.

I had a friend of mine who said he wanted to join me for a day of trapeze. He said he had a mortal fear of falling and of heights. I asked him if he understood that he would be doing two of those three things that day. He knew and he agreed. It took him several trips up before he was finally able to jump off the platform and swing, but by the end of the class, he was doing somersaults off the bar. Later, he thanked me for the experience and said he felt like now he could do anything in his life.

When I tell people some of the things I do: swimming with sharks, scuba diving, spelunking, repelling, zip lining, skydiving, paragliding, they ask me if I have a death wish. I say no, I have a life wish. I want to stretch myself as far as I can, physically, emotionally and spiritually. I want to experience every moment because we never know when it's going to be our last. Why wouldn't we want to fully live? Stay in the moment and enjoy your life, make changes and take risks. Fly high through life.

